

Blue Rose Romantic Fantasy – Preview

Persona

Just as abilities, focuses, and class help to describe the quantitative aspects of your character, a *Blue Rose* character has various qualitative traits, different aspects of the character's persona, the fictional personality you portray in the context of the game. Persona traits are just as important to game-play as abilities, perhaps even more so, since abilities and powers describe *how* your character does things, but persona helps to describe *why*.

This sections describes the different qualities of the persona you assign your character, including Call, Destiny, Fate, Goals, Relationships, and Reflexes.

Calling

Your character's Calling is their place in the world, their role in the grand story of life. Calling is broader and more overarching than simple Goals (following), involving life-long drives and motivations. Some characters are devoted to their Calling with an intense zeal, while others struggle to discover or understand it, or even actively deny it, trying to follow a different Calling, leading to frustration and sometimes tragedy. Characters gain Conviction for pursuing their Calling. See **Conviction** for more information on this.

There are as many ways to follow a Calling as there are people called. For example, two individuals might be called to temporal power (The Emperor). One might be generous and merciful, seeking power for the benefit of others, while the other is cruel and lusts for power for its own sake. The other aspects of a character's Persona influence how they approach their Calling. The Calling is a goal, while a character's Destiny and Fate represent two broad paths towards it, with Goals as stops along the way.

Among the cards of the Royal Road, the Roamers identify twenty-two primary callings in life, each associated with one of the Major Arcana. See the **Callings** table for a list of callings and their associated cards. When creating your character, you can choose from this list, draw a card from the Major Arcana and allow it to determine your character's calling, or come up with a different calling based on your own reading of one of the cards.

Callings

Card	Calling
The Fool	Adventure and excitement
The Adept	Mastery of the arcane
The Priestess	Oneness with spirit
The Empress	Protection of nature
The Emperor	Temporal power
The Hierophant	Spiritual or religious power
The Lovers	True love
The Chariot	Mastery of the martial arts
Strength	Physical perfection
The Hermit	Transmission of knowledge

The Wheel	Wealth
Justice	Justice
The Hanged Man	Inner peace
Death	Creating change
Temperance	Mediation of extremes
The Exarch	Trickery or uncovering the same
The Tower	Lowering the lofty
The Star	Artistic mastery
The Moon	Discovering and learning secrets
The Sun	Championing the everyday
Judgment	Atonement
The World	Exploration and discovery

The Royal Road

The Roamers are long-time students of destiny and fate. They have studied the vicissitudes of life, with its happiness and hardship, and recorded their findings in the Royal Road, a deck of seventy-eight cards (like our Earthly Tarot). Roamers use the deck for fortunetelling and to meditate on the passages of life, and Roamer seers sometimes use it as a focus for their arcana. Roamer caravans take pride in creating their own versions of the deck, attempting to outdo the artistry of others.

Each card bears an image and often its name and number. The cards are divided into the twenty-two Major Arcana, symbols of the milestones a person passes on the way toward the Eternal Dance, and the fifty-six Minor Arcana, symbols of everyday events, people, and moods. The four suits of the Minor Arcana are associated with the Primordials: swords with Selene, chalices with Braniel, rods with Maurenna, and pentacles with Anwaren. The seven gods of Light and seven exarchs of Shadow are said to govern the Light and Shadow aspects of the Minor Arcana, and some of them are depicted directly in the cards. For instance, Athne appears on the Major Arcana card Temperance, Gaelenir appears as the Hermit, and Aulora as Justice.

Destiny & Fate

A person's Destiny is their best self and highest potential, what some Aldean adepts call the "star-self," closest to the divine nobility of the souls of the Eternal Dance.

A person's Fate is their worst and most corrupt self, what Aldean adepts call the "shadow-self." It is the rejection of one's divine nature in favor of the often-cruel impulses of dwelling in the world and the terrible draw of Shadow.

Destiny and Fate are each defined by a particular characteristic or trait, and associated with a card of the Minor Arcana of the Royal Road, as shown on the **Destiny & Fate** table. As with Calling, you can choose your character's Destiny and Fate, or draw cards from the Minor Arcana to determine them. Because of the hubris of Anwaren and the actions of the Primordials, all people have a Destiny and a Fate, and exist in the space between them.

Characters gain Conviction by pursuing their Calling in accordance with *either* their Destiny or their Fate. The Narrator decides when an action is an appropriate fulfillment of these requirements, and awards the player a

Conviction point, although players can and should point out actions they believe merit a Conviction award for their characters.

Destiny & Fate

Minor Arcana Card	Destiny	Fate
Ace of Swords	Courageous	Cowardly
Two of Swords	Compromising	Indecisive
Three of Swords	Stalwart	Treacherous
Four of Swords	Calm	Agitated
Five of Swords	Humble	Cruel
Six of Swords	Optimistic	Pessimistic
Seven of Swords	Careful	Careless
Eight of Swords	Free-spirited	Stagnant
Nine of Swords	Compassionate	Despondent
Ten of Swords	Dispassionate	Cold
Page of Swords	Perceptive	Insensitive
Knight of Swords	Bold	Boastful
Queen of Swords	Exacting	Petty
King of Swords	Logical	Arbitrary
Ace of Chalices	Emotional	Hysterical
Two of Chalices	Affable	Standoffish
Three of Chalices	Gregarious	Inhibited
Four of Chalices	Ambitious	Apathetic
Five of Chalices	Hopeful	Remorseful
Six of Chalices	Reflective	Excessively nostalgic
Seven of Chalices	Practical	Deluded
Eight of Chalices	Daring	Stubborn
Nine of Chalices	Carefree	Peevish
Ten of Chalices	Joyful	Depressed
Page of Chalices	Expressive	Deceptive
Knight of Chalices	Charismatic	Manipulative
Queen of Chalices	Devoted	Capricious
King of Chalices	Thoughtful	Reactionary

Ace of Rods	Enthusiastic	Overzealous
Two of Rods	Conciliatory	Pugnacious
Three of Rods	Industrious	Slothful
Four of Rods	Merry	Dour
Five of Rods	Competitive	Complacent
Six of Rods	Confident	Apprehensive
Seven of Rods	Adventurous	Reckless
Eight of Rods	Witty	Sluggish
Nine of Rods	Diplomatic	Domineering
Ten of Rods	Moderate	Obsessive
Page of Rods	Resolute	Idle
Knight of Rods	Hard-working	Cynical
Queen of Rods	Curious	Jaded
King of Rods	Honest	Self-righteous
Ace of Pentacles	Generous	Greedy
Two of Pentacles	Judicious	Narrow-minded
Three of Pentacles	Meticulous	Sloppy
Four of Pentacles	Forward-thinking	Miserly
Five of Pentacles	Hopeful	Hopeless
Six of Pentacles	Magnanimous	Envious
Seven of Pentacles	Patient	Impatient
Eight of Pentacles	Dedicated	Mercenary
Nine of Pentacles	Appreciative	Fearful
Ten of Pentacles	Open-minded	Intolerant
Page of Pentacles	Inquisitive	Wasteful
Knight of Pentacles	Determined	Hasty
Queen of Pentacles	Nurturing	Suspicious
King of Pentacles	Resourceful	Sneaky

Corruption

All people in the world walk a path between their Destiny and their Fate towards their Calling, but some are driven by truly terrible acts. These push them towards corruption and the influence of Shadow. Characters become corrupt in two ways: by using sorcery (see the **Arcana** chapter) and by acting in accordance with their Fate in a corrupt place or while in contact with a corrupt item.

Corrupt Places: Places can become tainted with corruption over time. This is particularly true of former strongholds of the Sorcerer Kings, the lairs of Shadow cults, and similar locales. A corrupt place can spread its evil to those spending time there. A person who dies in a corrupt place arises the following night as one of the unliving unless the corpse is consumed by fire or some other means. A creature conceived or born in a corrupt place may be born as shadowspawn (see the **Adversaries** chapter).

Corrupt Items: A corrupt item is much like a corrupt place, except it only affects individuals in contact with the item, which can also move from place to place and person to person. Anyone carrying a corrupt item is subject to corruption tests, and an adept experiences a strengthening of sorcery and a weakening of other arcana unless the adept embraces the item's corruption (risking greater personal Corruption in the bargain). A corrupt item also have the same effect on its bearer as a corrupt place with regard to death, conception, and birth.

When a character risks corruption, make a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test. The target number is equal to the base TN of the sorcerous arcanum used. Acts of Fate performed in a corrupt place or in contact with a corrupt item have a TN set by the Narrator based on the act (see the table for guidelines).

TN	Corrupt Act
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11	Minor transgression (lying, petty theft)
13	Significant transgression (deliberately hurtful actions)
17	Major transgression (murder)
19	Grave transgression (complete betrayal of a bonded companion, murdering a unicorn)

A successful test means there is no effect (save for the consequences of the character's actions). A failed test means the character acquires 1 point of Corruption.

Effects of Corruption

A character's Corruption score applies as a penalty to that character's Constitution and Willpower scores. This means a character with Constitution +2, Willpower +1, and 2 points of Corruption has an effective Constitution +0 and Willpower -1.

Victims of Corruption experience these penalties as physical and mental symptoms. Physically they suffer fatigue, weakness, nausea, weight loss, and gnawing hunger that is never satisfied. Psychologically they feel growing fear, anger, paranoia, and mistrust. When presented with an opportunity to regain Conviction by acting in accordance with their Fate, corrupt characters must succeed on a TN 11 Willpower test to resist. Otherwise, they give in and follow their Fate for the scene. Characters can spend a point of Conviction to automatically resist this urge.

Corrupt characters whose Willpower drops below -5 go mad in accordance with their Fate, completely consumed by it. Corrupt characters whose Constitution drops below -5 die. The following night, the dead character becomes an unliving shadow (see the **Shadow** in the **Adversaries** chapter).

Embracing Corruption

At any point, corrupt characters can stop struggling against their Corruption and embrace it, giving themselves over to Shadow. This must be a conscious choice; it cannot be forced or coerced in any way. Embracing Corruption has the following effects:

- The character can only regain Conviction by acting in accordance with their Fate, not Destiny.
- The character no longer suffers any Constitution or Willpower penalties from accumulated Corruption.

- The character cannot benefit from the Cure arcanum when it is used by a non-corrupt character. The arcanum simply has no effect. Characters who have embraced Corruption can use Cure on other corrupt characters, including themselves.
- Corrupt adepts who have embraced corruption change the test abilities of all their arcana to their Corruption score. This means sorcerers who have embraced Corruption often wield considerable power.
- The corrupt character no longer gains Corruption from actions (including sorcery) but can advance Corruption like any other primary ability score.
- A deceased corrupt character cannot be restored to life using arcana. Three nights after death, a deceased corrupt character rises as a vampire (or a ghost, if the character's material body was destroyed). A corrupt adept with a Corruption score of 6 or greater rises as a lich instead. See the **Adversaries** chapter for details. Only complete destruction of the corpse by fire prevents this from occurring. Some corrupt characters deliberately cause their own deaths once they have embraced corruption to achieve one of these unliving states.

Redemption

Eliminating the influence of Corruption is a long and difficult road, so it is little wonder that many victims choose to embrace it, or simply struggle feebly until death, and unlife, claim them.

Characters with 1 or more points of Corruption can attempt to eliminate them by acting solely in accordance with their Destiny. Each time characters perform an act following their Destiny that would grant Conviction, they may choose to forego the Conviction point and apply it toward reducing Corruption instead. For every 10 such Conviction points applied in this way, the character sheds 1 point of Corruption.

Note that characters can still gain Corruption while working toward eliminating it, so it is often a struggle to stay ahead of the character's darker impulses. Characters may also find themselves in need of additional Conviction on occasion, taking an awarded Conviction point rather than applying it toward their redemption, or gaining Conviction by following their Fate. This slows, but does not end, the process.

Those who have chosen to embrace Corruption can no longer gain Conviction through their Destiny, so this avenue of redemption is closed to them. It takes a significant act of contrition in accordance with the Corrupt character's Destiny to start them on the road to redemption. The Narrator decides what is required and when the requirement is fulfilled, but it should be a quest of epic proportions to redeem so fallen a character. Even then, redemption is by no means assured; the character must still go through the process outlined here to eliminate the remaining Corruption score.

Goals

Calling, Destiny, and Fate help to drive characters in *Blue Rose*, while Goals describe the things they move towards on their journey. Goals are things your character wants to achieve, usually in accordance with the other qualities of the character's Persona.

When you create your character, choose at least two Goals. Ideally, consider a short-term goal—something the character can achieve relatively quickly—and a long-term goal, something that may take years, or even a lifetime to achieve. You might even want to have two short-term goals, depending on how ambitious your character is, but try to keep your list of Goals to no more than three at a time.

These Goals can be anything you want, from “Become a Blue Rose Knight” or “Achieve nobility in Aldis” to “Find the mysterious assassin who killed my parents” or “Discover the whereabouts of the ruined stronghold of the last of the Sorcerer Kings”. Work with the Narrator to define Goals that fit into the context of the overall

story and game; if your *Blue Rose* game isn't going to sea, for example, then having a Goal of becoming a ship-captain probably won't mesh too well.

While Goals do not have any mechanical effect as such, they do provide clear definition of what your character wants, which is useful information for both you and the Narrator. Your character's Goals can also be in accordance with one or more Relationships (following), which *do* have a mechanical effect. For example, if your character has a Goal of winning the love of a particular character, then a Relationship defining that love and its intensity makes sense and can help your character in achieving the Goal.

As your character achieves Goals in over the course of the game, replace them with new Goals that help to drive your character's story forward. When all of the player characters in your game have achieved their major Goals and new ones are not particularly forthcoming, that is a good sign that it's time to consider bringing your series to an end, or at least placing it on hiatus until such a time as suitable new Goals present themselves.

Relationships

Romance, rivalry, camaraderie, kinship, and other relationships are an important part of *Blue Rose* and a character's Persona. Key relationships are tracked by Bonds and the Intensity of those Bonds. Bond defines the type of the relationship: are the involved characters lovers? Friends? Foes? Intensity defines the strength of the relationship and its effect on those involved.

The rules in this section aren't meant to replace role-playing, but provide some mechanical guidance and weight to the players portrayals of their characters' relationships. Likewise, you don't need to (nor should you try) to model every single relationship between characters with these rules. They are for key relationships between lovers, friends, enemies, and rivals—the sorts of things that motivate or inspire acts of exceptional heroism or villainy.

Bond

Relationships are defined by Bond, a short description of the relationship between the character and the subject of the Bond, usually in the character's own words. These can be simple or complex depending on the relationship. Often relationships involve a mix of rivalry, romance, friendship, and hatred. Bitter enemies may have Bonds filled with nothing but aggression and enmity, while lovers or close friends have much more positive Bonds.

The following Bonds are examples of the sorts of Relationships that can exist between characters, although they are by no means the only ones.

Bond: *I love you more than my own life.*

A very strong bond, that of true love. It leaves open some questions of the exact nature of the relationship, making it a good choice for use when that's obvious (such as siblings or spouses) or when the exact nature of a relationship is still developing but the emotional connection is there.

Bond: *I will tear out your heart the way you did mine.*

Strong and no question of how the character feels about the subject of this Bond! The nature of this vengeance isn't defined, so it could be deserved or petty. Either way, this is a Bond that tells a lot about the character and the relationship.

Bond: *Having shed blood together, we are kin in battle.*

This Bond denotes extremely close friendship between two soldiers, warriors, or other military types. It also places the subject of this Bond higher than family, which might have some interesting implications for the character.

Bond: *When we are together I feel like I can do anything.*

A Bond that implies strong attachment and inspiration. Is there also love or attraction here? Perhaps, or it could be more of the confidence inspired by a mentor or role-model, or the hope given by a child or loved one who depends upon you.

Bond: *You are my true liege, my friend, and, while I would never say so, I love you.*

This is a complex, multi-layered Bond that speaks of friendship, loyalty, and unexpressed love. It's wonderful fodder for roleplaying and shows that the character puts a lot of stock into this relationship.

Subject

A Bond focuses on a given Subject, the person, creature, or even group or ideal to which the character is connected by that Bond. So, for example, if a character feels a deep bond of love for her parents, then they are the Subject of the Bond. A Blue Rose Knight might have a Bond with the Sovereign as the Subject, while rhy-bonded characters share a Bond with each other as the Subjects.

Note that Bonds are not necessarily reciprocal; characters might have a Bond of being attractive to or in love with Subjects who aren't even aware they exist, for example. Likewise, characters might have a Bond of vengeance against a foe who doesn't even recall wronging the character so many years ago. On the other hand, some Bonds are reciprocated, although not necessarily identical: A character may love someone who hates him, while another character feels familial responsibility for a relation who treats her with disdain.

The Subject of a Bond is typically an individual person, but not necessarily. Characters may have bonds to groups, institutions, creatures (such as pets or animal companions), places, or even ideals. The key is that the Bond (and its Subject) play an important part in the character's life. So a loyal subject may have a bond with the Sovereign (whether it is reciprocated or not), a scout may have a bond with a loyal animal-friend, and a ranger may have a bond with a particular beloved forest where she has dwelled.

Player Character Subjects

Relationships where the Subject of the Bond is another player character can be great and provide wonderful roleplaying opportunities. On the other hand, they can be awkward and no fun if both players aren't interested and invested in having a relationship between their characters. Because of this **no player character can have a relationship with another player character without the consent of both players**. You can't just decide the other vata in the party happens to be your brother, or that you're fiercely in love with the group's adept, or that you and the rhydan character should be rhy-bonded. The other player involved has a say in this. To do otherwise leads to uncomfortable, unpleasant, and even downright creepy situations that are anathema to fun—so don't do that.

This doesn't mean that the other *character* has to be okay with it and it doesn't mean that player character has to have a reciprocal relationship with you. As long as the *players* are okay with it, one character might be head over heels in love with a character who hates them or barely cares about them at all. A character might decide that another is to blame for the suffering in their life and swear revenge while the target of their vengeance obviously thinks they're the best of friends. These situations can lead to fantastic roleplaying opportunities—so long as everyone is on-board.

Intensity

In addition to Bond, relationships have an Intensity, describing the strength of the relationship between the characters involved. Since these rules are only used for important relationships, even the lowest Intensity relationship is stronger than a character's casual connections to others. Intensity is rated between 1 and 5. Even an Intensity 1 relationship is a significant force in a character's life, but greater Intensity can inspire characters to even greater acts.

Using Intensity

Intensity isn't just a number representing how strong a character feels for someone, it also has a mechanical effect. For each rank of Intensity, a character gets a free Stunt Point they can spend on actions relating to their relationship, once per adventure. This could be a combat stunt to attack a hated enemy or defend a loved one, arcane stunts to work powerful arcana to benefit a friend or harm a rival, and various exploration and roleplaying stunts involving situations that affect or center on a character's relationships. Stunt points granted by Intensity can be combined with stunt points earned from rolling doubles, if desired.

Example: *Jon's character, Zimal, is an adept who has an antagonistic Intensity 3 Bond with a particular sect of Purists who tried to kill him when his talents first manifested. When he encounters those Purists on an adventure trying to help other young adepts escape persecution, he rolls doubles while using his arcana to help the group escape, generating 3 SP on the Action Die. Figuring that seeing his would-be killers really motivates Zimal to pull out all the stops, Jon also uses 1 rank of Intensity from his relationship to generate 1 additional SP. This allows Zimal to use the Fast Casting stunt (cost 4 SPs), quickly wielding his arcana and buying his companions time to escape. He now has 2 more Intensity he can use later in the adventure if this doesn't work!*

Stunt points from Intensity recover at the beginning of the next game session, though in cases of game sessions spanning long periods of time GMs may allow Intensity stunt points to recover during a session.

Expressing Relationships

When recording a relationship on your character sheet or elsewhere, simply combine the Subject of the relationship, the Bond, and the Intensity. You can do this narratively or more as short notation. So the complete relationship would look like this:

Lord Angral (3): You killed my father and ruined my family. I will see you executed from your crimes.

Or

Lord Angral killed my father and ruined my family. I will see him hang for his crime (3)

Other variations are possible. As long as the GM and players can readily identify the Subject, Bond, and Intensity, it's all good.

Starting Relationships

Blue Rose characters start with two relationships, one at Intensity 2, the other at Intensity 1. A character might have many friendships, rivalries, or even romantic interests, but these are the only ones strong and significant enough to qualify as true Bonds. It's often a good idea to have one relationship with another player character or regular Narrator character in the story, but it's not required.

Example: *Joe's rogue Pakric is a former smuggler on the run from his old "business associates." He decides one of his initial relationships is his former partner, Harkner, who took Pakric's leaving personally and wants to bring him down to prove his loyalty to the gang. The other is with Steve's stoic vata warrior, Tella, who helped Pakric escape an ambush, resulting in the two of them traveling together for some time—a situation that is both beneficial and at times annoying for the usually fun-loving rogue. Joe records Pakric's relationships as:*

Harkner hates me for leaving, but I we were like brothers once and I don't want him to get hurt (1)

I owe **Tella** my life, though she could stand to lighten up (2)

Adding and Strengthening Relationships

At levels 6, 11, and 16, characters can add a new Intensity 1 Relationship or increase the Intensity of two existing relationships by 1 each.

Example: Reaching lvl 6, Joe can add another relationship to Pakdric. Having developed a solid friendship with Donna's Orlesian haughty but good-hearted apostate mage, Vadeline, he wastes no time in adding a new relationship. He defines this as:

Vadeline is a true friend I'd trust with my life, even sometimes if she tries to act too good for us (1).

Any relationships not selected at character creation or when a new relationship can be added can be chosen later. This can be useful, as sometimes important connections and bonds between characters form during play.

Changing and Removing Relationships

Relationships change and even end. Someone who was once very important to a character may die, leave, or perhaps the two just drift apart. Love may turn to hate, friendship to love, and so on.

To reflect this, when it seems logical that a relationship changes, its Bond can be rewritten to reflect the new nature of the relationship. This shouldn't be too often, but when there is a significant shift in how a character feels, rewriting the Bond makes sense.

Example: Jon's adept, Zimal, has a relationship with the scout, Hella, and has fallen in love with her over the course of the campaign. The relationship is defined as:

*I love **Hella** and trust her implicitly (2)*

However, during an adventure Jon discovers Hella once worked with a group of bounty hunters who tracked "rogue" adepts for the Church of Pure Light and she personally killed or captured other adepts during this time. After the adventure, Jon realizes Zimal still cares for Hella, but he no longer trusts her. Jon talks to the GM about this and they agree to change the Bond to:

*I love **Hella**, but I'm not sure I can trust her (2)*

This relationship has some of the same elements, but the lack of trust means it comes into play differently, such as helping Zimal if Hella tries to stab him in the back or sell him out. Such an event could also easily result in the relationship changing from one of love and caring to a vendetta.

The same principles apply if a relationship ends. When a relationship is over or otherwise no longer important in play, it is removed and replaced with a new relationship. The Intensity from the relationship is distributed between existing relationships, including the new one, as the character reassesses their priorities and feelings. Characters can save some Intensity and reassign it over further game sessions if that makes sense; sometimes it takes time to develop or strengthen other relationships after an important one ends.

Example: Hella and Zimal eventually part ways because of growing distrust over her past. When they split their relationship was at Intensity 3. Jon, Zimal's player, now has 3 Intensity to add to an existing relationship or which can be used to create a new one. He decides to increase the Intensity with a fellow party member who's been helping him deal with the break up by one and save the remaining two to spend later. The Narrator notes this and starts considering potential relationship opportunities to put in Zimal's path in coming adventures.

GMs might want to spread the reassignment of Intensity out over a few game sessions to be more realistic. Also, just because a character dies or leaves the campaign doesn't mean a relationship with them automatically ends. A character who loved someone who was killed by a major campaign villain might change their relationship to an antagonistic one with their loved one's killer, or example, or even a dedication to that loved one's memory or cause.

Persona and Narrator Characters

Important Narrator characters in your *Blue Rose* game can have Persona qualities just like the player characters do, including their Calling, Destiny, Fate, and Relationships. Indeed, defining these qualities is quite useful in bringing Narrator characters to life and using them to help drive stories.

That said, Persona qualities are really only for *important* Narrator characters. There's no particular need to define the Relationships of every shop-keeper, farmer, or street-tough characters happen across in the course of their adventures, nor do you need to know the Calling of each and every villager or palace official. These characters are little more than scenery, rather than players upon the stage of your story. Still, in the event that their Persona does become relevant, keep in mind that you can quickly and easily determine their Calling, Destiny, and Fate using the tables in this chapter, and you can assign them suitable Relationships as you see fit, starting with the basic two at Intensity 2 and 1, respectively.